

## Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 9 of 13

*W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tspön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He continues commenting on the Reting incident, the bomb attack on Taktra and the arrest of Reting. The subject also discusses in detail how and why he bought gold from the U.S. The subject also tells about how Nehru asked him to tell the Tibetan government to sign a treaty with newly independent India that would allow India to maintain the rights it inherited from British India, and how the Kashag refused to do that.*

Q

How come a parcel addressed to the Regent could be opened by a servant of the [Trunyichemmo](#)?

A

That is not the question. The question really is how come he dared to keep the parcel so long [without telling anybody]. As far as its opening is concerned, they made the servants open it after the poster saying that there was doubt about what was in it appeared. Immediately, [after it blew up] Lhalu and [Trunyichemmo] Chönphe Thubten who both happened to be in the Deship Office, started investigating. Not many days passed after that, when one day in the [tsikhang](#) we were giving a test on [diu](#) [tib. rdel rgyugs] for candidates wanting to become new officials. During that time, we have to meet in the early morning. We were also slightly dressed up and they would prepare the [droso](#) chemar and such stuff. At that time, the [drönyer](#) of [Ramba](#) came to the Tsikhang to deliver a message saying that the Trungtsi have to attend an important meeting in the Kashag in [Tse](#).

In normal circumstances, the notification or the messenger should come from the Shöga. We discussed among ourselves why Ramba's [drönyer](#) came to give the message. When

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we went to the Kashag at [Tse](#), there were only 2 shape present, [Ramba](#) and [Kapshöba](#). Lhalu and Surkhang were not there. We waited near the [Tseja](#) office, but they still didn't come and the [kadrung](#) and the [kandrön](#) said that the shape have not gathered yet. So we talked among ourselves. That morning they asked us to come early and now still they haven't all come for the meeting. After that, they said that Lhalu had asked for leave to go somewhere where they were renovating the Genphel Wutse [tib. dge 'phel dbu rtse] because the Dalai Lama was going to visit there, and all the Trungtsi are requested to go to the Kashak immediately. Then they closed the door and told them to stop accepting petitions. Then they said that last night they received a telegram from the [Tibetan government's] Nanjing Bureau. This was the real cause. This was the real cause of the Reting trouble.

Q

This was the telegram that was only allowed to be read by the officials of the Kashag and above, right?

A

I am not sure about that. In the telegram they mentioned that Reting had sent people there and was seeking support from Chiang Kaishek. And they were saying that the [Taktra](#) administration was not doing good work, etc. All these things were in the telegram. Then the two [Shape](#) said it is very bad that this thing has happened so we informed the Regent, and Lhalu and Surkhang have left to invite [bring] Reting here. So you all have to go and seal the property, etc... On top of us, the Jigyab khenpo was also present at the meeting.

Q

Who was the Jigyab Khenpo?

A

The Jigyab Khenpo was Kyenrab [tib. mkhyen rab]. This Jigyab Khenpo was also at the meeting held the night before Surkhang and Lhalu left and everybody was astonished. The Jigyab Khenpo also gave further explanations to the Trungtsi on top of what the shape explained. We were all shocked to learn about this. He said what would happen and what we would do. At about that time, there was a knocking on the door. By that time they had

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already opened the outer door and had started knocking on the inner door. So someone said get up and open the door.

Q

Normally, would they knock on the door like this?

A

Yes, they would. They were knocking on the inner door as all the [kandrön](#) had to get out and the outer door was also closed.

Q

Who opened the outer door?

Q

They had to open it because the [nendrön](#) came and knocked on the door. So someone said get up and open the door. So I think [Namseling](#) got up and opened the door. Then we put a small seat for him and said what is it? He said, "While observing through binoculars [didn't know who was watching through the binoculars] they saw 4 people leaving Reting Labrang in Lhasa with weapons via Dogde [tib. dog bde] [that means toward Reting monastery]. It may be they were trying to chase after them [the Shape] or to get ahead of them to warn Reting, so we may lose our secrecy. So it may be better to send some people to catch these people. So then they called the [magji](#).

Q

So the [nendrön](#) left and somebody from the Kashag left and called the [magji](#). After some time, [Ragashag](#) came since he was the [magji](#). So they told [Ragashag](#) that 4 people have left [but not about the telegrams] to Reting via Dogde and that he should send people to catch them and bring them back [tib. rjes snon]. I don't know whether he sent anybody or not. This talk in the Kashag took about 1-2 hours and then we left.

Q

What was in the telegram?

A

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In the telegram they talked about them seeking the support of Chiang.

Q

I heard that Reting offered certain territory below Chamdo if Chiang helped him to regain the Regency.

A

All these things were in the telegrams. It was the cause. [The office in Nanjing included Tsadora [tib. tsha rdor ba] Khenjung and two others] At that time, we didn't know about the bomb.

So we went back and the Trungtsi had a meeting and discussed how to go to seal them. So we decided to seek the representatives of the [Tse](#) ga and Shö ga. So then we said that if they have made preparations they may even respond with violence so we should also inform the [Trapchi](#) Regiment to send soldiers down to Reting Labrang [in Lhasa]. After deciding to do that, we left. We divided into two groups and went. The reason why we divided into two was that if the Trungtsi went together with so many people, the public may get shocked and talk a lot so we tried to make smaller groups.

One group left from the northern gate of [Shöl](#) and one group left from the back. We decided to meet at Reting Labrang. When we arrived there, the soldiers had not yet arrived and there were [dobdo](#) walking up and down in Reting Labrang. So Chömphe Thubten suggested that we should not stay together in a bunch, but should spread out. So we did this. As far as I was concerned, the Reting people didn't know anything about our coming because one of their servants was just reading the Gesar story and putting his legs against the wall and lying and reading. One of them stood up right away. So we asked them if the [dzasa](#) was there. They said he had gone to Yabshi's house. So the servants didn't know what was going on. The main people may have known, but the stewards and monks didn't know. They had no instructions so they didn't know what to do. On the roof, an exorcism [tib. gtor rgyag] rite was being done by Geshe Samdrup [tib. bsam grub] Rinpoche. All the Trungtsi were separated and were waiting at the door of the room, pretending to be watching the birds near the chandzö's room. Some were walking on the courtyard roofs and some were waiting at the chandzö's office door. So the Trungtsi got scared because these people had no instructions and were ready to take any action. They were just waiting for instructions [without any instructions, they might do anything]. So Chömphe Thubten sent his servant immediately to look for the soldiers. His name was

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probably Thubten or Tempa [tib. bstan pa]. However, the moment he went out he came right back and said the soldiers are coming.

Then the soldiers immediately came marching into the Reting Labrang house and straightaway went on the roof tops and courtyard tops and completely took over the situation. We were very relieved and got together again. Then we sent for the [dzasa](#). We sent Tsarong to get the [dzasa](#). [Tsarong and [Shatra](#) were there representing the Kashag because they were kandrön]. The senior [dzasa](#) [ex-dzasa] came from the teaching grove, [tib. chos ra] [near the main house] up to the main house. As for Nyungney Lama, he was not there. We heard that as we walked in he walked out covering his head by wrapping it with his shawl. Then as it was quite late, we started to seal up everything.

Q

I heard that a lot of bombs were discovered in the house. Is that true?

A

Yes. There were a lot of bombs [hand grenades]. We didn't find any that day, but later when we came back to examine the documents we found them in the dzasa's drawers. They were brought out by [the lay official] Jorgye [tib. 'byor rgyas]. All the bombs were wrapped in yellow cloth, [tib. ser 'thum] [like gifts of money].

Then we talked and said that someone who knows how to use these should be called, so we called Rupön Bükhangnga [tib. sbud khang ba]. He came and was told to throw one on the threshing ground of [Shide](#) Labrang. At first it was said that it should be thrown in the courtyard, but he said it's not possible to do it there since it will break all the glass windows, etc., so they exploded the bomb in the threshing ground of [Shide](#) [the open area at the back of Reting Labrang]. Then we arrested both of the [dzasa](#) [the current and the former] on the first day. And, of course, Reting was brought in. And the rest everybody knows.

Q

It seems that that incident led to these circumstances, and that [Taktra](#) otherwise did not have any plan for arresting Reting earlier.

A

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Taktra didn't have any plan at all. But after the incident of the [Jönga Chöpa](#) when we received information not to go, which was later confirmed by the confiscated correspondence which indicated that they were planning to shoot [him].

Q

This shows that [Taktra](#) knew about that.

A

But we didn't know that. Later in the letter, it said they should destroy him on the night of [Jönga Chöpa](#), but if this is not possible, they will shoot him while he is returning to [Taktra](#) at the Tshakhur Linga. These were revealed in the correspondence. This is definite.

Q

Did Reting know that the 2 shapes were coming to get him?

A

He definitely didn't know. Those 4 people who went to catch up with the [Shape](#) reached Phöndo [tib. phod mdo] [an area just before Reting] about the same time as the soldiers came, and then they both raced to see who would reach Reting first. So Reting Labrang was aware of this since they sent the messengers to Reting monastery. And the [dzasa](#) was aware of it since he had gone to [Yabshi](#).

Q

Who would he talk to in [Yabshi](#)? The Dalai Lama's father (tib. Gyeyab [rgyal yab]) was already dead.

A

Yes, who would he talk to?

Q

Incidentally, I heard the Gyeyab died by poison.

A

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How could that be possible? In Tibet it is not easy to give poison like that. It's not possible.

Q

I heard that the Gyeyab was poisoned and even the mother was also sick for a long time. This was done because he would try to block the punishment of Reting as they were very close friends. [He died about a month before this, at New Years time].

A

It can't be.

Q

Didn't Reting have any plans to challenge the arrest?

A

If they had a plan they should have acted. They may have had a plan, but could not execute it.

Q

I also heard that Nyungney Lama suggested that when the Trungtsi walked in they should be arrested and held as hostages. Or if we don't arrest them, we should invite them in and carry a bomb in our hand and explode the bomb and kill ourselves and them too. To both these ideas, the [dzasa](#) did not agree.

A

Whatever may be, when we walked in, Nyungne Lama killed himself, right?

Q

At that time I was in Lhasa and I remember that our [chandzö](#) saying that Nyungne Lama was coming toward our house. Our gate was locked since there was obviously something going on in Reting, so we locked our door. We were just opposite Reting. He tried to come in our house, but he when he found the door locked, he thought for awhile, and then went to someone else's house and entered the toilet and shot himself.

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A

When we called Nyungne Lama he was not there, but we saw in his house [his separate house] the bomb box [the box in which they keep the bombs]. He made a few such boxes in different shapes. Some were small biscuit type boxes where you could have a sliding cover. They had a hook on the cover which they attached to the firing mechanism. When the cover was slid open, the bomb would explode [the grenade pin would be pulled]. That was definite. I saw this.

Later when we searched Reting Labrang's property, we saw many bombs in the dzasa's storeroom. The bombs had been sold to Reting by one of the lay official called Chingpa [tib. bying pa]. Chingpa sold them to Loro Tseggye [tib. tshes brgyad], a horse trader, in exchange for horses and he in turn sold them to Reting.

Q

Is this really true that Reting Labrang sought support from Chiang Kaishek?

A

I don't know how far it is true, but popular rumor said that in Sera monastery the monks were looking up in the air waiting for Chinese troops to come by air. This was the talk in town. I heard that Chiang had sent a request that Reting is a great high Lama and all these punishments should be as light as possible. These were said, but I haven't seen any letter, etc. It never came into to the Trungtsi. I was also on the Investigatory Committee of the Tsondu, and even to them, it was not shown at all. The rumors are like that, but I have seen no evidence.

Q

I even heard that in the telegram sent by the Nanjing Bureau it said that they [the Chinese] have issued orders to move soldiers to Lhasa. Such a telegram had come.

A

Not that one. I don't mean that one. What I mean is that the Chinese representatives in Lhasa received some message on their wireless requesting as light a punishment as possible [for Reting]. This I heard, but I have no proof. About the other telegram regarding sending soldiers, I don't think such a thing happened.



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Q

Who was in Nanjing at that time? It was Thubten Sangbo [tib. thub bstan bzang po], right?

A

Yes, it was Thubten Sangbo, Tsidrung Chabdre sang [tib. chab drel tshang] and the tsendrön was the son of the Thangpön Nyerpa [tib. thang dpon gnyer pa]. All three were [tsidrung](#).

Q

Thubten Sangbo told me that they sent the telegram, though I couldn't interview him. I asked him when he came to print something and he said that Kujar told him about it.

A

How did Kujar know this?

Q

As you said, how could he know?

A

As far as Kujar is concerned. It was very strange. It seems sometimes he was close to Reting and other times that they were enemies and he wanted to do nasty things to Reting. I don't understand what was going on with them.

Q

It is definite that Kujar didn't get along well with Reting. I heard that Reting Labrang's Chöpönla [tib. mchod dpon lags] made Kujar suffer [financial] losses in India.

A

How could Kujar do that?

Q

He would not know that the matter would reach the extent it did.

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A

A terrible thing was done.

Q

Was Reting really killed or what happened?

A

When I was there, I was involved in it. I didn't see that he was killed at all. But, now when I hear he was killed, I'm shocked.

Q

I heard that Lhalu accepted the guilt at a meeting [after the uprising in 1959].

A

That was terrible. I heard that he is even writing a book.

Q

I also heard that it was [Kapshöba](#) who said that they should kill Reting, saying that you should do something when you have him in your hands.

A

I heard that Reting Dzasa said in Delhi that the Chandzö Chemo went to seek the advice of [Kapshöba](#) and that [Kapshöba](#) said, "You have to do something when you get him this time, but I can't do anything. So tell Lhalu." I just heard this last year and I was shocked because we were on the Investigatory Committee.

Q

I didn't know that Reting Dzasa said that.

A

Was it said that [Sambo](#) said that? Wasn't it you who told me this? I heard this in Delhi.

Q

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I heard from [Shatra](#) that [Kapshöba](#) said that.

A

And Lhalu might have told them to do that.

Q

In short, Lhalu confessed this and wrote it in a book. Later I heard that the lay official with the twisted mouth, the younger brother of Lhalu, confessed that the [nendrön](#) gave him two pills, one of which was blue, and told him to give both the pills to Reting. It was also said they killed him by squeezing his testicles.

A

But whatever it is, maybe we do not know anything. As far as we were concerned, Tsarong [Sawangchemmo](#), Gyetakpa, Khenche Lobsang Tashi were there as representatives of the Tsondu to make observations and check the body. Also a representative of Reting Labrang was there as well as the [Sera Je](#) Abbot. When they returned, Tsarong told the Tsondu that there was no evidence that he had been strangled and there were no wounds or anything. And, as you all know, when we interrogated Reting Rinpoche, the interrogation was done by the Tsondu, so nobody even hit him with even one snap of the finger [a common punishment in schools]. However, there was some bruise on the back, just above the rear end. It might have been the punishment of a protective deity. Everybody laughed at that.

As far as we were concerned we thought that was the real thing. There was no system of post-mortem examination in Tibet. Then the body was removed in a small palanquin and put in a bathtub and the necessary treatment was done [wash and put incense, etc.]. Then they put on his monk's dress and also the deity costumes and then put him up on the throne. After this, a lot of blood came out continuously from his nose.

Later I also heard that if you squeeze the testicles, later a lot of blood will come out from the nose. So when people say that Reting was killed, I get upset because I was in the Investigation Committee and we interrogated everybody, including the bodyguards and supervisors. Each one of them filed an affidavit [statement] but there was no such talk at all then. Now when they start talking I get upset.

Q

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According to the Tsondu, when did Reting die?

A

Probably, around midnight. It was said that they went to the [Tseja](#) to get water.

Q

Somebody, maybe the [tsidrung](#), someone who was supposed to be there that night even filed a statement with the Tsondu that he was there but in reality he was not there but was in Lhasa that night. When people asked him why he made that statement in the Tsondu, he said, "I didn't have any choice but to say that." What do you say about this?

A

The highest [tsidrung](#) responsible was a [khenjung](#). The personal attendants to Reting who were appointed by the government were the twisted mouth, Porkyo [tib. spor kyog], and the Tsidrung nicknamed Phebola [tib. bal po lags]. Appointing Porkyo as an attendant was interesting.

Q

I heard that Phebola was a very bad person and they had replaced the [tsidrung](#) Thubten Nyima [tib. thub bstan nyi ma] with Phebola.

A

These were the two who sat there and served him in the room. Above this, was the [khenjung](#). There was also one bodyguard named Kesang [tib. skal bzang] who was a [gyagpön](#). Below that was the clerk, [Jola](#) Chambala [tib. jo lags byams pa lags] whose job was to give food, etc. Above Chambala there was [Tseja](#) Mindrubug [tib. smin drug sbug] who used to be the secretary of the [Yigtsang](#), the [Yigtsang](#) Nyerpa [tib. yig tshang gnye pa]. From every one of them we took a statement and all gave the same type of statement.

After many years, when the Dalai Lama went to [Yadong](#), I went to Delhi to talk to the Chinese. Then all of a sudden I had to go to [Yadong](#). At that time, one morning while I was having breakfast together with [Panda](#) and [Sambo](#). [Panda](#) said, "Reting was killed, he was killed." I told [Panda](#), "Please don't say that. He was not killed. We were there the whole time investigating." Then I said, "Whether Reting was killed or not killed, [Jola](#) Chambala is here, why don't you ask him." Then we called in [Jola](#) Chambala. So he said exactly the

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same version as I said. Then [Panda](#) got shocked and said, "Why are you telling lies, tell the truth. In Lhasa I have talked to so many people all who said Reting was murdered. Tell the truth." Then Chambala said, "Actually I don't know because that night I took leave and went home." Then I told him, "You gave a statement in Tsondu and in that you said you went to get Reting hot water, etc. So how can you now say you weren't there?" Then Chambla kept quiet. At this time the first suspicion came in my mind. So I thought this is how they tricked people. Until then I never had a doubt. After that I developed suspicion. Then my doubts became more and more, and then I heard from Delhi [?] and I was completely shocked. As far as I'm concerned, I can swear by the three jewels and the two Buddha statues in Lhasa [tib. jo shak rnam pa gnyis] that I was not at all involved.

Q

We are not doubting you. If it [the order] came, it came directly from the [Taktra](#) Nendrön and the [Taktra] Labrang.

A

As far as the Trungtsi are concerned, they are important when the Kashag needs them to lay the blame on [to wash their hands of], otherwise they do not have many things to do.

Q

As far as we are concerned, the Trungtsi are known as the Pillars of the Tibetan government.

A

As far as I am concerned, I see the Trungtsi as messengers. Whenever there was a problem in the Tsondu, all the replies and answers have to be given by Trungtsi, so the decision of the Tsondu has to be done by the Trungtsi. And then we have to go up to the Kashag we have to answer all their questions, etc. So, whenever the Kashag has to say something bad the Trungtsi have to carry the news back to the Tsondu. So it is like the saying in Tibetan, "When you burn your hand you use tongs" [tib. [lag](#) pa tsha dus skam pa]. We are the tongs. Actually, I swear by the Buddha statue, that we had no power at all. We had a big name that the Kashag couldn't make decisions without the Trungtsi. So it looked very important, but we had nothing. We couldn't appoint officials, we made no appointments to [dzong](#), we had no foreign dealings. Nothing. But whenever there was

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trouble in the Kashag, then they called the Trungtsi and we had to take the blame. We met with the Kashag and discussed just as Kashag members even if we were not that knowledgeable. However, when [Lukhangwa](#) was there, he would make everything perfect and fair for everyone, even for the Kashag. The [Trunyichemmo](#) were a little better than us since they had appointment power for the [tsidrung](#) and could instruct the monasteries. So Tsipön were supposed to be the head of the lay officers, but we had no power at all to appoint anyone.

We appointed people to collect grain and things owed the government, but even there we had to submit the candidates to the Kashag. As far as problems were concerned, wherever there was a big problem then we had to be involved. So when the Trungtsi couldn't take blame then they washed their hand on the Tsondu. And when the Tsondu couldn't take the blame, then they washed their hands by rolling [senriy](#) or asking the lamas to do divination or consult the deities through the oracles.

So the problem was that nobody really could understand the advantages and disadvantages [of action] properly. [so they couldn't take decisions and started blaming others]. This was due to not having proper education. So leave aside the world, even as far as India and China we didn't know what was happening and who were their leaders, etc. Nobody knew that in Tibet. Only Tsarong knew a little bit and sometimes he would give us some news. So it was only because of the blessing of the three jewels and the protective deities that this government had lasted that long. As far as what I have done, I didn't have the title of finance secretary, but I was a type of finance secretary. In addition to that, I had the portfolio of the [Trapchi](#) office.

Q

The [Trapchi](#) Office might have been very powerful, right?

A

Yes. Because of that I was able to contribute to keeping the exchange rate stable and have less inflation and also avoid the fluctuation of the gold rate. I was able to do this. That much I was able to do. But for that we had to fight with the Kashag like anything all the time. Because the Kashag, without looking at the balance, would issue gifts or donations for thousands of [dotse](#) or hundreds of thousands of [khe](#) of barley. Sometimes it was for the military and sometimes it was for the monasteries for prayers. So we had to argue with them about this. The Tsipön couldn't tell the Kashag, but the [tsipa](#) could tell the Kashag.

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We requested the Tshipön to talk to the Kashag and they were saying that they will tell the Kashag but even 2 years passed once. At that time, there was Trekhang [Sawangchemmo](#) and [Bönshö](#). Then one day we had to borrow 1,000-2,000 [khe](#) of barley from Jogpo [tib. 'jog po] Labrang and I went to the Kashag to get the seal to stamp it and at that time I, the [tsipa](#), told the Kashag that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is coming soon and a tremendous amount of grain is needed and you are also saying that we have to print money, but all the grain stores are empty. All the grain in [Tö](#) is completely emptied and in Shigatse it was almost empty. And recently from the Lhobrag [tib. lho brag] area, much grain was taken out, so when you have to print the money notes, there is no grain at all in the [tsikhang](#). Most of the grain was used for money exchange and for giving awards. It was a chance for me. They said all right, we will consider this. [Bönshö](#) said this.

That evening Trekhang [Sawangchemmo](#) called me and told me this was supposed to be reported to the Kashag by the Tshipön, but since you have told it to them, it didn't fit with the wishes of the [Shape](#) [means they were not pleased]. So similarly they did this to the [Trapchi](#) Office. [Lukhangwa](#) used to say that since the seal of the Kashag is made of iron, it won't ever wear out, so they can go on stamping orders.

Q

I heard the [Trapchi](#) Office ignored the order of Kashag and its gift certificates, and sometimes later they asked them to come at a later date, etc.

A

Yes. We had to do it since there was no money to give. That is what made us buy the gold. This led us to buy the gold because when we had to print notes and there was no grain to back it up, so we had to buy the gold to back up the notes.

Q

Please tell me something about the purchase of the gold.

A

The gold reserve in the [Trapchi](#) Office was very little. There were only a few gold bricks and a few gold biscuits and a few silver pieces. That's all. I don't remember the exact number, but there was not much at all. And we could print as much paper money as we wanted. We could print as much money as we wanted [irrespective of the amount of gold

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or backing]. Tsarong was worried about this because he knew that the money printed had to have some kind of backing. I also learned about this as well. So we were discussing all the time about how can we manage with so little backing.

Mr. Tsarong has been telling us a story about when he went to Russia or somewhere he heard that one of the nation's currency notes could not be backed up by gold, etc. so many people brought the notes back to collect the silver or gold value of the currency note but they had none to give, so one finance minister had no alternative but to jump from the roof of the house. Similarly, we will have to do the same thing. Tsarong told us that currency notes means that the government guarantees the value of the note in gold or some other commodity.

So Talama and the three of us, the Dzatatsi [tib. dza ta rsis gsum] [the [dzasa](#), the [talama](#) and Tsipön] discussed this a lot. Then they decided to collect gold and silver. If it was collected in India, then of course it was at the normal rate so it would be better if we could buy it from the U.S. or England. So then we decided in the [Trapchi](#) Office to buy gold.

Then we [three] presented this plan to the Kashag. The Kashag went through the motions saying that they cannot take responsibility, so they called the Trungtsi to meet with them. Then it went to the Tsondu. At the Tsondu, I spoke. The most effective speaker was Tsarong. He told them that whatever money you receive especially for monks and for making offerings, etc. just now it is paper money. In case something happens and when you monks bring this paper to us to exchange with valuable objects like gold or silver, then I have nothing to give you. I am just now telling you. Other nations in the world when they bring the currency notes back to the government, whether the government gives it or not, there is gold or silver of an equal amount to back up the paper currency. But as far as the money you have in your hands, it is only a piece of paper, nothing else.

So the three great monasteries got up and gave very strong support saying how can this be? We have to do something. What can we do? Then they decided to buy gold. After this, Talama said I am not going. So it was left to Tsarong and me. Tsarong told me that since you are younger, why don't you go. So I decided to go. At about that time the Regent and the Kashag said that we have this claim of Tibetan independence so you have to make it as clear as possible to the world that we are independent. So for these reasons, we thought of making the passport also.

In America, we had a problem about purchasing gold and I almost had to go to Mexico, but finally the U.S. government sold us gold. The gold was sold to us by the U.S. Government. Normally I was told by many lawyers that the U.S. won't sell gold unless



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they recognize the government [of the country]. There was a letter from the Reserve Bank allowing the Tibetan government to buy gold for as much money as they had. This particular letter of the US government was framed and hung in the [Trapchi](#) Office, but it was left in Tibet.

We didn't have enough money, so the exchange money was given by India and they gave us a lot of trouble, but finally they gave it to us and we bought the gold. Then when I brought the gold back to Tibet, I was told to go and negotiate with China, but I wanted to complete my work so I told the government that I am going to hand over the gold in the Dalai Lama's chamber and I am going to stamp every piece of gold with the Tibetan Government stamp. We got an idea that if we have a government stamp on the gold, then it would be allowed to be taken to foreign countries. So we made a stamp in the [Trapchi](#) Office that bore the lion design and Tibetan letters saying that this is the work of Dzatatsisum in the [Trapchi](#) Office to back up the currency. We made a big stamp and put in on each gold brick. Our fear was that afterwards we would be transferred here and there and then people would start borrowing the gold and then it would be finished. So for these reasons, we put the stamp on everything.

So I made my work complete and clear. I also told them I will not leave Tibet for negotiations unless and until I have been given a receipt for this [gold]. I already took my departure audience, but I was not given the receipt [tib. bka"dzin] so I didn't go anywhere.

Q

At that time, you were a Tsipön and you were supposed to go to China for talks, right?

A

Yes. After I did the [thönja](#), I had another audience in the [drungja](#) and then I got the receipt.

Q

You brought the receipt here, right?

A

Yes. At that time I got a gift from that Dalai Lama-brocade enough for making a chuba, one roll of woolen cloth, one protective blessing string and a leather packed load of something.

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Q

At that time, the Dalai Lama hadn't taken the religious and the political power and it was Taktra's reign, right?

A

Yes. I offered the gold to the Dalai Lama thinking that if the gold went to the [Trapchi](#) Office, people will borrow it even though it was stamped.

Q

This was the gold that reached India, right?

A

Yes. The other thing was that I worked in the Delhi Bureau for six years. During this time, I swear by the three jewels, that I didn't even take a jacket for me and my children from the relief funds.

Q

This was your great contribution.

A

It was not my contribution, but I have not taken any bribes from any other nations. Alo Chöndze fought with me saying I bought my house in Kalimpong, etc., using the government's gold and silver. But we never touched that gold at all. This is known to Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen.

Q

Yes, there should have been a person behind you while you were on those jobs.

A

Yes. At that time the Kashag didn't like me because I argued with them very strongly because at that time the Kashag wanted to show [give] the gold to the Chinese in Tibet. But I wrote a very strong letter to the Kashag saying that this gold cannot be handed over to them [he is referring to after 1951]. It was not only for this Dalai Lama, but also for

many future Dalai Lamas so we have to preserve it. For instance, I even heard that the Chinese borrowed gold and silver from the Namse Gendzö [tib. nām sras gan mdzod] [the government treasury in Tse]. So we were not returning this gold at all. I wrote this to the Kashag. When Alo Chöndze and all them wanted money from this gold to work for Tibet, we did not give them anything at all. So as far as the Khenjung was concerned, he hadn't used a single penny out of that.

After the arrival of Dalai Lama [in 1959] then I requested [hat](#) t hey take over the gold. We had a meeting in Hyderabad house in Delhi with all the shape there. I was also called there because I was the Delhi Bureau head at that time. So they said we are going to take over this gold soon. They told me to go and get it since you will know better how to do this. I said no, I won't be able to do it. At this time Alo Chöndze was making allegations that [Shakabpa](#) bought a house, etc. from the government gold and now is enjoying himself. Such talk is still alive. As far as my house in Kalimpong, I bought it in 1946. At that time there was no talk of China or gold. We were doing wool business and I had sent my children to school [in India] so they need a winter holiday home, so I bought that house. So I told this at the meeting in the presence of the Dalai Lama. Then the Dalai Lama asked me who will be best to go and get it. You make a suggestion. Surkhang was there, Yuthok wasn't there. All the others were there, Liushar and Talama were there.

So then I told the Dalai Lama, "In the past, the wealth was handled by the Dzöbu [tib. mdzod sbug] Office [Dalai Lama's personal treasury], so the Jigyab Khenpo and Simpön Khenpo are here so they should do it. Everybody thought that it was a good idea to have the two of them go. Tsarong was sent to help them get the gold. The gold was in a basement hiding room with one door in the Sikkim King's residence with four [Trapchi](#) Regiment soldiers and two Sikkim orderlies guarding this all the time.

I told the Khenjung to hand over the gold properly including even bringing the seals on the door of the room it which it was hidden. Since that day I had no more responsibility for the gold. Afterwards, we met Jigyab Khenpo Gadrang [tib. dga' brang] and Simpönla in Kolkata and they told me they couldn't understand anything about this gold business because they go to one place, they come back and go to another place, so we can't understand anything [about how to sell it]. So I told them please sit there [working]. Even if you don't understand, it doesn't matter. Please stay there. Your presence will make a lot of difference. But unfortunately they resigned and you know what happened to the gold afterwards.

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I worked for the [Trapchi](#) office and I had not a speck of gold dust stuck on me. I worked for the Bureau and I didn't have even a good jacket. [After them, Tsarong was in charge of the gold and then Gyalo Thondup was finally in charge]. I'm making this clear to everybody, not because I'm worried about myself, but to make my children clean. Anyway, please tell Mella do not write anything that would harm Tibetan independence and try to write the accomplishments of the Tibetan dharma kings and the Dalai Lama and do not write about the cesspools of Tibetan history. I have many things to tell you about where I was thwarted in some endeavors. It was like the 5th Dalai Lama said, "Leave alone the religious practices, even for the worldly things, it depends on merit." [tib. lha chos lta bzhang mi chos bya gzhang kyang/ lam du rgyug pa bsod nams la rag las pas] Because of my demerit, I was always thwarted even when I thought it would be successful when putting forth my efforts for independence.

I also reported about Nehru's instructions, but the people in the government, I don't know who, didn't put that into action. The easiest would have been [as] Nehru said, "Even if you don't sign a new treaty [with India] about the McMahon Line, [we should] accept [tib. rtsa 'dzin] the old treaty." I told them this many times. If we had signed that, what would the situation be now? How could the Indian Government not accept us? The Dalai Lama himself told me about this mistake. I sent the information through the Indian Government's wireless and I even sent a horseback messenger [tib. rta shad] from [Yadong](#) Jigyab saying you have to do that [what Nehru said]. [In Tibet they were talking saying] we were afraid because India became independent so we were acting cleverly saying the leaving the old one is better [but didn't do anything]. [tib. da rgya gar gyi 'dod pa'i nang la shor gyi red / zhed snag de yod red/rgya gar rang btsan byung/ a ni mkhas po snyan po byas/ de las rnying pa kho rar bzhang pa dga' gi red] If we had signed it, could the Indian government had stayed without accepting us [as independent]?. Even now, the Dalai Lama says, "If the Indians had to accept the treaty on the Sino-Indian border, then Tibet is independent."

Q

He doesn't have any choice but to say that.

A

At that time if we had been able to do that, how good would it be now.